

SUGGESTED TALKING POINTS on Public Interest
Group Lobbying

I. HOW TO GET ACCESS ON CAPITOL HILL?

* SINCE NONPROFIT INTEREST GROUPS DON'T GENERALLY HAVE ACCESS TO PAC MONEY AND CANNOT AFFORD TO ATTEND EXPENSIVE COCKTAIL PARTIES, YOU MUST GET ACCESS TO MEMBERS THROUGH DIFFERENT MEANS.

-- YOU MUST HAVE COMPREHENSIVE KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE RAMIFICATION^⑤ OF YOUR ISSUE.

I. SUBSTANTIVE KNOWLEDGE: IMPACT ON FEDERAL AND STATE LAWS; IMPACT ON AGENCIES ASKED TO ENFORCE PROPOSED POLICY; IMPACT ON PRIVATE INDUSTRY (COSTS, EMPLOYMENT);

II. POLITICAL IMPACT: WHO IN CONGRESS WILL THE POLICY IMPACT? WHICH COMMITTEE'S HAVE JURISDICTION?;

-- YOUR ORGANIZATION AND REPRESENTATIVE MUST HAVE THE HIGHEST DEGREE OF PERSONAL INTEGRITY AND CREDIBILITY. FOR EXAMPLE, YOU MUST BE WILLING TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE INDUSTRY'S POINTS WHERE THEY ARE CORRECT.

-- YOUR ORGANIZATION MUST BE AN ONGOING SOURCE OF UP-TO-DATE INFORMATION AND ANALYSIS AND BE ABLE TO RESPOND QUICKLY TO CONGRESSIONAL REQUESTS. TWO GROUPS WHICH PERFORM THIS ROLE PARTICULARLY WELL ARE THE COALITION ON SMOKING OR HEALTH AND THE CENTER ON BUDGET AND POLICY PRIORITIES.

-- YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH A MEMBER WILL EVOLVE OVER SEVERAL YEARS OF WORK. IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT STAFF TURNOVER BE MINIMIZED EVEN IF THAT REQUIRES INCREASING STAFF SALARIES. STAFF TURNOVER DOES NOT PROMOTE ORGANIZATIONAL CREDIBILITY. ONE OF THE DANGERS OF LOW SALARIES IS THAT YOU TRAIN YOUR STAFF AND THEY LATER MOVE OVER TO THE PRIVATE SECTOR.

-- YOU MUST BE WILLING TO USE THE PRESS IN A MEMBER'S DISTRICT TO MAKE YOUR POINT AND CONVINCE THEM THAT YOUR ISSUES ARE IMPORTANT TO THEM. MANY OF THE ENVIRONMENT GROUPS SUCH AS THE NATURAL RESOURCES DEFENSE COUNCIL DO THIS WELL.

-- YOU MUST CULTIVATE CONGRESSIONAL STAFF (PERSONAL AND COMMITTEE).

2. COALITION BUILDING

- YOU MUST BE WILLING TO FORM COALITIONS EVEN WITH ORGANIZATIONS THAT HAVE PREVIOUSLY BEEN OPPONENTS IF YOU SHARE THE SAME POLICY OBJECTIVE.

FOR EXAMPLE: THE ENVIRONMENTAL AND HEALTH GROUPS WORKED WITH THE CHEMICAL COMPANIES AND FARMERS IN THE PESTICIDE REFORM BILL. THE BILL WASN'T ENACTED -- BUT THEIR COALITION RESOLVED ISSUES CONGRESS COULDN'T HAVE RESOLVED.

3. GOLDEN RULES OF LOBBYING

- BE WILLING TO COMPROMISE.

POLITICS ISN'T A GAME OF WINNING OR LOSING. IT IS THE ART OF TIMELY COMPROMISE WHEN IT ENABLES YOU TO MAKE GAINS -- SOMETIMES SIGNIFICANT, SOMETIMES SMALL. YOU CANNOT ALLOW YOUR COMMITMENT TO THE PUBLIC INTEREST TO BLURR YOUR POLITICAL JUDGEMENT THAT YOUR LEGISLATIVE OBJECTIVE IS NOT OBTAINABLE. AT THAT POINT ITS TIME TO COMPROMISE.

- BE PATIENT.

SOME LEGISLATION WILL TAKE SEVERAL CONGRESSES TO PASS. THE CHILDREN'S DEFENSE FUND KNEW THAT EXPANDED MEDICAID COVERAGE FOR PREGNANT WOMEN AND YOUNG CHILDREN WOULD REQUIRE A MULTI-YEAR EFFORT. STRONGER CIGARETTE WARNINGS TOOK THREE YEARS. CIVIL RIGHTS LEGISLATION TOOK DECADES. YOU MUST ACCEPT THE FACT THAT IF WE ARE WORKING TOWARD LONG TERM OBJECTIVES THAT INCREMENTAL VICTORIES ARE JUST THAT: VICTORIES.

- UNDERSTAND EACH MEMBER YOU ARE TRYING TO INFLUENCE.

UNDERSTAND THE PRESSURES ON THEM, KNOW HOW TO REACH THEM, KNOW HOW TO KEEP THEM. CULTIVATE HOMETOWN PRESS. MEET WITH EDITORIAL BOARDS; ASK OTHER MEMBERS TO HELP YOU MAKE YOUR CASE. ITS A TIME CONSUMING PROCESS BUT BE WILLING TO TAKE THE TIME.

- HAVE A SENSE OF HUMOR.

4. MAKE EFFECTIVE USE OF YOUR GRASSROOTS MEMBERSHIP.

- IF YOU ARE A MEMBERSHIP ORGANIZATION, YOU NEED TO COMMIT TIME TO DEVELOPING THE CAPABILITY OF YOUR MEMBERS TO INFLUENCING MEMBERS OF CONGRESS IN THEIR DISTRICTS. IF POSSIBLE, IDENTIFY "GOLDEN BULLETS" -- CONSTITUENTS OR CONTRIBUTORS WHO ARE PERSONALLY CLOSE TO THE MEMBER.

DURING THE CIGARETTE LABELING BATTLE, THE AMERICAN LUNG ASSOCIATION DEMONSTRATED THE VALUE OF "GOLDEN BULLETS".